

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

May 20, 2002  
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room  
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Marshall, Deputy Mayor Degginger, Councilmembers Creighton, Davidson, Lee, Mosher<sup>1</sup>, and Noble

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Degginger opened the meeting at 6:03 p.m. and announced recess to executive session for approximately 15 minutes to discuss a personnel matter.

At 6:20 p.m., the meeting resumed with Mayor Marshall presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Downtown Implementation Plan and Subarea Plan Update

City Manager Steve Sarkozy said the purpose of the ongoing review of the Downtown Implementation Plan is to develop recommendations for urban design and transportation solutions. Leslie Lloyd, Bellevue Downtown Association, and Councilmember Creighton are co-chairs of the DIP Citizen Advisory Committee.

Ms. Lloyd said the CAC is composed of 36 members representing downtown property, business, and residential interests. Half of the members live in the downtown area. Mr. Creighton said the current effort is aimed at preparing a 20-year plan for the downtown core incorporating design and transportation elements. The City's goal is to accommodate expected growth in the downtown under the Growth Management Act in order to protect neighborhoods from increasingly dense development.

Mr. Creighton noted the CAC voted to recommend further study of an option to widen Bellevue Way. He emphasized that more information, including completion of the environmental impact statement (EIS), is needed to fully analyze this long-term alternative. Ms. Lloyd said the study

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Mosher was absent from the meeting after 8:00 p.m.

will evaluate the impacts associated with increasing capacity, as well as not increasing capacity, on Bellevue Way.

Dan Stroh, Planning Director, said Bellevue is expected to accommodate future population growth within the urban growth boundary. The City has chosen to focus most of this growth in the downtown and thereby protect neighborhoods and rural areas. Mr. Stroh said an economically vital downtown generates a healthy tax base, which helps to keep residential property tax rates lower than they otherwise would be. Approximately 75 percent of the growth expected over the next 20 years is focused in the downtown. Downtown employees are expected to increase from 35,000 today to 79,000 employees in 2020. In 2000, there were 2,900 downtown residents. The 2020 forecast anticipates 14,000 downtown residents in 10,600 households.

Mr. Stroh said many issues are being addressed in the Downtown Implementation Plan process including access/congestion, parking, economic vitality, neighborhood character, parks and open space, livability, fire and life safety, multi-modal transportation, and arts and culture. The review process involves many pieces to fit together: urban design, transportation, Subarea Plan update, and fire and life safety. The Citizen Advisory Committee will identify alternatives to be analyzed in the environmental impact statement (EIS) and eventually recommend an Implementation Plan and Subarea Plan. Bellevue Boards and Commissions will review the information and City Council will ultimately make decisions for the updated Downtown Implementation Plan.

Mr. Stroh displayed and reviewed the DIP project schedule. An open house was held in April and a newsletter to residents will be published soon. The hybrid analysis and draft environmental impact statement will be completed this summer. Mr. Stroh said tonight's discussion will focus on urban design ideas, a transportation update, and next steps for the EIS.

Arlen Collins, urban design consultant with Collins Woerman/Street-Works, recalled the DIP's vision statement that Bellevue be viable, livable, memorable, and accessible. The consultant report indicates Downtown Bellevue needs an urban strategy to respond to its evolution from a suburban bedroom community.

Mr. Collins explained that the use of districts as a planning principle is a way to enhance each area's value. A district's boundary should be identifiable and a district should be small enough to encourage pedestrian activity. Mr. Collins suggested reducing Bellevue's nine downtown districts to seven, with a City Center district running east to west along the Pedestrian Corridor and three districts each to the north and south. He displayed a sketch representing an idea to connect Old Bellevue/Downtown Park to the waterfront.

Mr. Collins described the concept of signature streets. He reviewed downtown's assets along Bellevue Way including Bellevue Square, Downtown Park, Old Bellevue, and the Northwest Village area and suggested this be designated as a shopping street. He noted that commerce is primarily located along 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue and suggested that 106<sup>th</sup> Avenue could become an entertainment street with clubs, restaurants, and after-hours venues.

Mr. Collins discussed the importance of establishing sufficient pedestrian crossings in the downtown to encourage pedestrian activity. He noted Bellevue's interest in and study of a downtown circulator and Portland's success with its new streetcar circulation system. Mr. Collins said a circulator is important not only for its transportation function, but for its role in distinguishing Bellevue as a memorable and livable place. He discussed the designation of pedestrian-biased and auto-biased streets, downtown gateways, parking needs, and open space.

Kris Liljeblad, Assistant Director of Transportation, provided a status report on downtown transportation needs. A 150 percent increase in total person trips is expected by 2020. Both roadway improvements and expanded transit service will be needed to avoid congestion. Mr. Liljeblad said the Citizen Advisory Committee is studying alternatives to incorporate the following core elements: neighborhood protection, aggressive transit and HOV expansion, travel demand management and parking, pedestrian and bicycle system, and limited roadway improvements. The CAC started by looking at three action packages emphasizing roadways, transit, and intercept parking and eventually created a fourth Hybrid Alternative incorporating the most effective elements of the three approaches. These four packages, as well as a "no action" alternative, will be analyzed in the environmental review.

Mr. Liljeblad said the CAC began to discuss alternatives for Bellevue Way based on projections for increased congestion over the next 20 years. The CAC would like further study of four Bellevue Way options to identify environmental and neighborhood impacts. The purpose of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to be completed in September 2002 is to describe alternative packages, impacts, and mitigation measures; foster and document comments from the public and participating agencies; and assist decision makers in selecting a preferred alternative. The Final EIS is scheduled for publication in early 2003.

Mr. Stroh noted Attachment 4 (Page SS 2-36), a list of goals and outcomes associated with the Transportation Element of the Downtown Implementation Plan Update. Once the Draft EIS is released in September, there will be opportunities for public comment on the report. Information is available on the City's web site and a project newsletter will be going out soon.

Mr. Mosher clarified that the City's intent is to anticipate and plan for its inevitable growth. Mr. Stroh noted that projected growth is based on current zoning.

Responding to Mr. Degginger, Mr. Liljeblad said the Draft EIS will study environmental impacts including air pollution, noise levels, and neighborhood impacts. Mr. Liljeblad said any project recommendations from the DIP Update will be subject to the normal competitive process for City programming and funding. Therefore, it would be 7 to 10 years before any of the new projects are implemented.

Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. Collins said the consultants analyzed transportation options identified by the CAC such as expanded transit service and street widening. Mr. Lee questioned the absence of more visionary solutions. Mr. Collins feels the Transportation staff is focusing on solutions that are practical and effective rather than experimenting with unproven technologies and/or solutions that would not be feasible within the larger regional context.

Ms. Lloyd noted that one advantage of the EIS process is identifying the impacts associated with a “no action” approach to transportation. She feels Bellevue must push for regional solutions on I-405 in order to alleviate local traffic congestion.

Responding to Mr. Noble, Mr. Stroh said the region’s population is expected to grow steadily over the next 20 years with economic ups and downs anticipated every seven to eight years. Mr. Noble feels the DIP Update is an important planning effort, whether or not there is dramatic growth over the next 20 years.

Dr. Davidson reflected on the City’s downtown rezoning activities 20 years ago and commented that implementation plans have been consistent with the vision established at that time. He is pleased with the DIP Update process and wants it to continue to move forward. He feels this is an important effort to gather data and make informed decisions about the community’s future.

Mayor Marshall offered her input regarding ideas to make Bellevue a memorable place. She would like people to remember Bellevue as an experience, and specifically an experience related to Council’s vision for preserving Meydenbauer Bay as a public place. She envisions an urban design that will link the Pedestrian Corridor, Downtown Park, and Meydenbauer Bay. Mrs. Marshall described her long-term vision for high-capacity transit on I-90, through Bellevue, and connecting to other Eastside cities. She asked the DIP CAC to schedule some of their meetings in the evening, as requested by residents. She suggested the City explore the feasibility of a partnership with Bellevue School District to provide a local bus circulator service. Mrs. Marshall encouraged transit-oriented development in association with the short-term intercept parking facilities.

Mr. Creighton noted that Deputy Mayor Degginger and Mr. Noble also serve on the CAC. Mr. Creighton commented on the importance of 20-year planning, thanked Councilmembers for their input, and offered to provide an update in the fall.

(b) County Executives’ Draft Regional Transportation Proposal and Statewide Transportation Plan (Referendum 51)

City Manager Steve Sarkozy introduced a discussion of the County Executives’ Draft Regional Transportation Proposal and the Statewide Transportation Plan (Referendum 51). Mr. Sarkozy requested Council direction regarding priorities for regional transportation spending on Bellevue’s key corridors and initial direction to staff to assist in developing priority alternatives to bring back for Council discussion in the coming weeks.

Diane Carlson, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, provided an overview of two transportation proposals, Referendum 51 and a draft regional plan created by the County Executives of King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties. The Statewide Transportation Package will appear on the November ballot as Referendum 51. This package is largely funded by a 9 cent gas tax increase to generate \$7.7 billion over the next 10 years. Funds are restricted to expenditures for highways.

Noting that Puget Sound would receive two-thirds of the total revenue, Mr. Mosher questioned how much this region would pay into the tax collections. Ms. Carlson will provide the figure to Council.

The County Executives' proposal represents a \$12.6 billion investment plan with \$7.5 billion available to King County. Proposed revenue sources include a \$75 vehicle license fee as well as MVET (motor vehicle excise tax) and sales taxes.

Transportation Director Goran Sparrman reviewed past Council direction from the Regional Transportation Vision adopted in 1999. The vision's priorities include a balanced mix of multi-modal regional transportation investments, economic development, and protecting and enhancing Bellevue neighborhoods. Mr. Sparrman displayed a map reflecting Council's transportation corridor policy direction integrating freeway improvements, enhanced HOV facilities, regional buses, and high-capacity transit. He discussed proposed guiding principles for 10-year transportation implementation based on Council's priorities:

- Implement a balanced investment and identify corridor investments in priority order.
- Achieve maximum performance through strategic system investments that add capacity and reliability.
- Only promise what can be delivered within the next 10 to 12 years.
- Ensure investments are consistent with public expectations and adopted growth policies.

Mr. Sparrman proposed the following investments on major freeway corridors:

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| I-405 | Add up to two lanes in each direction. Complete HOV linkages between I-90 and I-405. Early implementation of Bus Rapid Transit system, including park and ride lots and direct access projects. |
| I-90  | Add two HOV lanes, one in each direction. Consider high-capacity transit between downtown Seattle, downtown Bellevue, and Redmond. Improve HOV linkages.  |

Mr. Sparrman said needed improvements to SR 520 could not be completed within a 10-year window and will require a majority of anticipated regional funding. He questioned to what extent the region should invest in SR 520 for basic preservation and safety. Mr. Sparrman displayed a table reflecting funding for each of the three corridors under the two transportation package proposals. Neither package allocates adequate funding to SR 520.

At 7:58 p.m., Mayor Marshall declared recess to the regular session. The meeting resumed at 9:32 p.m. with Mr. Mosher absent.

Kim Becklund, Transportation Policy Advisor, requested Council direction to assist staff in developing alternatives based on Council's priorities.

Mayor Marshall asked Councilmembers to comment on the guiding principles proposed by staff in the presentation.

Mr. Noble questioned the use of specific criteria for prioritizing investments. He wondered whether funding should be allocated for whole or incremental projects, or both. Mr. Sparrman suggested that projects be prioritized based on the maximum performance to be achieved in a reasonable time frame. Ms. Becklund said staff will develop more specific information for proposed projects on each corridor to assist Council in designing a strategy.

Deputy Mayor Degginger said one guiding principle should be to eliminate regional traffic from Bellevue's local streets. He feels the speed of implementation for various alternatives is an important criteria in prioritizing projects as well.

Mr. Creighton agreed with Mr. Noble that it is important for Bellevue to be able to advocate effectively for its priority projects. Noting that Referendum 51 is focused on highway funding, Mr. Creighton is reluctant to spread funding too thinly between multiple transportation modes as implied by the principle for a "balanced investment." He said highways are needed to support transit and transportation alternatives, and he noted there are additional funding sources for alternate transportation modes.

Dr. Davidson concurred with Mr. Creighton's concern that funds be focused strategically on effectively addressing congestion. Dr. Davidson supports roadway projects as a priority for the near future.

Mayor Marshall discussed issues related to Sound Transit. She explained that RTA taxes collected for the East Subarea between 2006 and 2009 are currently designated as ineligible for spending, although the issue has not been definitively resolved. Mrs. Marshall would like a mechanism in the regional transportation package to access this money for needed projects on the Eastside. She said Sound Transit is interested in presenting a companion ballot measure with the regional transportation package in the fall. Eastside cities are largely in favor of separate ballot measures because if the issues were combined, Sound Transit's concept of subarea equity would no longer exist.

Mrs. Marshall said the County Executives' proposal is based on the premise that monies would be spent in the county in which they are raised. Similarly, King County funds would be allocated between the east, west, and south subareas.

Mr. Noble cautioned that a strategy to fund only projects that can be fully funded and completed within 10 years could work to the detriment of funding any improvements for SR 520. He feels Council should not adopt guiding principles that could jeopardize funding for SR 520.

Mr. Lee feels it is important for Bellevue to proactively shape the regional transportation system. He expressed concern about the constraint of selecting projects that fit within a 10-year implementation window.

Dr. Davidson hopes to see strong regional leadership to guide and support transportation funding. Mr. Creighton agreed that Bellevue must think regionally while working pragmatically toward meeting the Eastside's needs. He feels the Eastside must be an advocate for highways to balance competing interests for transit funding and transportation projects in Seattle.

➡ At 9:59 p.m., Mr. Degginger moved to extend the meeting to 10:05 p.m. Dr. Davidson seconded the motion.

➡ The motion to extend the meeting to 10:05 p.m. carried by a vote of 6-0.

Mr. Sparrman said staff will return for a more detailed discussion of specific alternatives. Mayor Marshall noted that King County and other jurisdictions will continue to discuss these issues over the summer.

Mayor Marshall declared the meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Michelle Murphy  
Deputy City Clerk

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